

## Northern Indiana: where tranquility and activity meet.

By Sally Campbell Grout

Plan a trip to Northern Indiana, and your trip is likely to define “paradox.” Activities can run the gamut from a calorie-burning walk up a sand dune to a who-cares-about-calories tour of a chocolate factory. From a glimpse at vintage automobiles to a day with people who still travel by horse and buggy. From a leisurely day at a museum to a dazzling night at a casino. So pick your entertainment preference, pick a weekend or two, and hit the road to Northern Indiana.

### **The invigorating outdoors.**

Whether you’re ready to work up a sweat, push your endurance level, or simply test your mettle, Northern Indiana has plenty of places to meet your needs.

Runners know one of the few things more challenging than running in sand is running in sand uphill. The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in Chesterton (800-959-9174) offers 25 miles of shore along Lake Michigan and plenty of outdoor activities. If you can make it to the top of the 135-foot Mount Baldy, you’ll get an incredible view of the lake. You’ll also get a slow motion ride, sort of. Because Mount Baldy does not have vegetation to stabilize it, the wind and water push this huge sand dune backwards a few inches every year.

Within the National Lakeshore you’ll find the Indiana Dunes State Park (219-926-1952). Camp, hike, swim, and, if your calves are up to it, try to conquer Mount Tom. At 192 feet, it’s the lakeshore’s highest sand dune.

Ready to sit, but not rest? Bicycle Beaches and Backroads (888-259-5999) is made up of 20 signed routes throughout LaPorte County, covering more than 400 miles of farmland, hills, woods, and the Lake Michigan area.

Northern Indiana’s water fun isn’t limited to Lake Michigan. You’ll find plenty of other lakes in the area; in fact, you’ll find more than 100 of them in Kosciusko County (800-800-6090). Here, the clear water is surrounded by wooded shorelines, beaches, and wetlands. Among those 100 lakes are Indiana’s largest natural lake, Wawasee, and Indiana’s deepest natural lake, Tippecanoe.

### **The invigorating indoors.**

You don’t have to face the elements to get your heart racing. At any of several area casinos, you can test your skills at games of chance. The Indiana Welcome Center in Hammond (800-255-5253) can direct you to the four casinos in Lake County: Harrah’s East Chicago, Majestic Star

Casino, Trump Casino, and Horseshoe Casino. However, the Welcome Center is a worthwhile destination itself. This uniquely designed building houses exhibits, a museum, and a gift shop. In LaPorte County, Michigan City's Blue Chip Casino and Blue Chip Hotel (888-879-7711) features 1,500 slot machines, blackjack, roulette, and other games.

### **Things that make you say "wow."**

Throughout Northern Indiana, you'll find destinations that you simply have to walk through to have your excitement level kicked up a notch. The Studebaker National Museum (574-235-9714) is guaranteed to thrill both the history buff and the auto aficionado. Along with 114 years of Studebaker history, the museum displays the carriage President Lincoln rode in the night he was assassinated. In fact, four presidential carriages are here, along with military vehicles made when the company fulfilled defense contracts, and personal cars and trucks driven by earlier generations of Americans. To earn extra credit on that automotive history lesson, head to Door Prairie Auto Museum in LaPorte (219-326-1337). The diverse collection here includes such rare specimens as a 1948 Tucker, a 1915 Model T Ford, and an 1886 Benz Motor Wagon. The museum also features unique airplanes and antique toys. Of special note: a re-creation of a block of old Main Street in LaPorte, showing storefronts of three different eras.

After you've taken note of what can be done with tons of steel, downshift to a place that's filled with incredible structures made of toothpicks, Popsicle sticks, and other household items. At the Bird's Eye View Museum of Miniatures in Wakarusa (574-862-2367) "tour" (well, look at) miniature Indiana landmarks. These unique structures were started in 1961 for a son's electric train set.

Is there ever a wrong time of year to conjure up a little holiday spirit? Not if you're Norm and Dorothy Snyder. As owners of the Hallmark Ornament Museum at The Party Shop In Warsaw (219-267-8787), the Syders, along with son David Hamrick, proudly display every Hallmark ornament made--and Hallmark has been making them since 1973. Have a special Hallmark ornament from years gone by that's missing from your collection? You may be able to find it here.

No room in your house for a collection? How about acquiring something wonderful that's guaranteed to disappear quickly: chocolate. The South Bend Chocolate Company, Factory & Museum (800-301-4961) produces such tastebud pleasers as Michigan Cherry Meltaways, Old Fashion Toffee, Pecan Patties, Raisin Clusters, and Chocolate Covered Peanut Butter Logs. Perhaps the best place to taste the product is right where it's made. The 16,000 square foot factory, complete with an outlet store and café, is open for tours. The free Basic Factory Tour lasts about 20 minutes

and features chocolate production and fresh-off-the-line samples. The Inside Scoop Tour (\$4 for adults, \$1 for children) lasts about 30 minutes and includes some “chocolate surprises.” All tours are scheduled by appointment; tour group sizes are limited to 10 people.

### **Simple and serene.**

Some parts of Northern Indiana make you want to take a deep breath and relax.

It might be inaccurate to say that the Amish in Northern Indiana live at a slower pace. After all, they manage to build homes, grow food and make clothes without most of the modern conveniences the rest of the world can't imagine living without. However, there is something incredibly peaceful about a place without blaring radios and ringing phones. A great way to experience the area is with an Amish Country/Elkhart County Audio Driving Tour (800-860-5949). Actually, two tours are available, the Heritage Trail and the Furniture Crafters Tour. The Heritage Trail was named one of the nation's top 40 scenic drives by Life Magazine. A guidebook plus two audio cassettes or CDs guide you on a more than 90-mile loop through Elkhart, Bristol, Middlebury, Shipshewana, Goshen, Nappanee, and Wakarusa. The Furniture Crafters Tour, which also runs for more than 90 miles, guides you to local furniture crafters' places of business, and discusses how the ancestors of today's craftspeople came to this part of the country.

If your trip through Amish Country brings out your inner artists or craftsperson, here are a couple of places you may want to visit for inspiration. Quilt Designs in Goshen (574-534-5111), located in a two-story 1837 log cabin, is the showroom and custom studio of fiber artist Shirley A. Shenk. Stop by to see original quilts and wall hangings. At Martin's Quilt Shop in Nappanee (574-831-2256), you'll see many beautiful and unique quilts, some of which are made to order.

If all this rustic charm inspires you to, say, make some bread from scratch, why not start with some grain that's been ground the old-fashioned way? Bonneyville Mill in Bristol (574-535-6458) is Indiana's oldest continually operating gristmill, and freshly ground grains are available for purchase. The mill itself is located in scenic Bonneyville Mill County Park, which offers 223 acres of gently rolling hills, meadows, woodlands, and marshes. Hike seven miles of trails and watch the wildlife. Or, bring your pole and tackle box and try your luck in the little Elkhart River, where you may catch small-mouth bass, panfish, and stocked rainbow trout.

### **Two fun festivals.**

Like the rest of the Hoosier State, Northern Indiana loves to celebrate with festivals. Among the favorites, one is juicy, one is crunchy, and both are

filled with plenty of fun. In Plymouth, the Marshall County Blueberry Festival (888-936-5020) salutes the fruit that no muffin should be without. Mark your calendar for September 3-6, 2004 to enjoy more than 500 craft booths, more than 100 food booths, and antique car show, fireworks, magic shows, clowns, and other entertainment. The following weekend, September 11, 2004, visit the Valparaiso Popcorn Festival (219-464-8332) to experience the nation's only Popcorn Parade, two music stages, more than 500 arts and crafts booths, two music stages, and more.

Whether you want to work up a sweat or simply unwind, shop until you drop or be one with nature, you'll find hundreds of ways to experience Northern Indiana, and the rest of the state, at [enjoyindiana.com](http://enjoyindiana.com).